

Hand in Hand by Ellie603

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Summary:

As 1984 draws to an end, Nancy has to be thankful for Jonathan... and for a chance for them to make peace with Steve Harrington.

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Author's Note:

For now, each of the stories in this series will be a stand alone one-shot, focusing on a particular character and moving forward in time from the end of 1984 through 1985.

I love Nancy and Jonathan a ridiculous amount, but I also adore Steve and just want them all to be friends, so here we go.

Enjoy!

Christmas had come and gone, the highlight for Nancy being the personalized photo album that Jonathan had given her. Only the first few pages were filled up with pictures, all from the last year, with the volume increasing significantly from after they had officially gotten together in November.

"I wanted it to be big so we could fill it up with memories, you know?" Jonathan had said after she'd opened it, clearly nervous about whether she'd like it or not.

Nancy had looked up at him, a blinding smile on her face. "I love it, Jonathan. Thank you."

Nancy in turn had gotten him a Polaroid camera.

"I know you don't shoot Polaroid," she'd explained quickly, "but I thought it might be nice for if you want to have something right away when we aren't near the darkroom. It's not as nice as your actual camera or anything, but just for some things."

Jonathan had cut her off with a kiss. "This is really great, Nancy. You're really... great."

Nancy had laughed in response and kissed him again.

The backlash against Nancy and Jonathan at school had been

significant. It seemed everyone had known that the two of them had left school early one day and hadn't come back for the rest of the week. Nancy had returned to school before Jonathan, who had stayed home to take care of Will for an extra few days, but even before Jonathan came back Nancy had found herself the subject of near constant gossip about how she cheated on Steve with "that freak Byers kid." With Steve out with his concussion and Jonathan at home with Will, everyone had assumed that there had been a fight and no one was sure who had come on top until Jonathan had finally showed up without a scratch on him, just an air of physical and mental exhaustion.

"Just so you know," Nancy had whispered to him in the school parking lot on the day he came back, "everyone thinks you and Steve got in a fight over me or something and that I cheated on him with you."

Jonathan had frowned. "Why can't they all just mind their own business?"

Nancy had leaned her head on his shoulder. "I know."

Nancy had grabbed Jonathan's hand before they entered the building, and he had looked over at her, clearly asking if she was really okay with the insults and gossip that would result from just this action. Nancy had squeezed his hand tightly in reply and the pair had pushed open the doors and walked down the hallway together.

The whispering had been immediate.

"Byers looks okay, but I heard Steve's a mess. Guy must be a psycho."

"Wheeler's literally not even hiding it. Poor Steve."

Nancy had rolled her eyes. "As though any of them actually care about Steve. From what Mike's said, it sounds like Dustin and the other kids have been his only visitors besides us."

Jonathan had smiled slightly. "Funny how no one's connected the fact that Billy Hargrove looks like shit," he had inclined his head at

Billy down the hallway, bruises clearly on his face and arms, “to Steve being beaten to a pulp. Everyone knows they didn’t get along.”

“It’s more fun to think I’m a slut apparently,” Nancy had replied as they reached her locker where “SLUT” was scrawled in large red letters.

“Subtle,” Jonathan had commented as he let go of Nancy’s hand, leaning back against the locker next to hers. “Real funny.”

“I wonder if they got your locker too,” Nancy had worried, looking up at Jonathan.

Jonathan had shrugged. “Probably. Oh well. We’ll clean them off later.”

Nancy had nodded and started to get her books.

“I’ve got to go grab my stuff but I’ll see you 2nd period?” Jonathan had asked, seeming suddenly nervous about their relationship.

Nancy had smiled at him. “Yeah, of course.”

Jonathan had started to walk away, but Nancy had grabbed his hand and pulled him back for a quick kiss.

Jonathan had grinned and left, no words necessary.

“So that’s real? You and Byers? Come on Nancy.”

Nancy’s friend Allie had come up behind her while Nancy was watching Jonathan leave.

Nancy had shrugged. “He’s really sweet.”

“So was Steve,” Allie had countered, her eyes hard.

“This isn’t about Steve, Allie,” Nancy had explained, trying not to sound too exasperated. “Steve and I are good. We’re friends, we’re fine. Jonathan and I even visited him at the hospital.”

Allie’s curiosity instantly had overtaken her annoyance at Nancy’s

choice in guys. “So Steve really did get hurt?”

“Billy Hargrove attacked him for no reason.” That was the story that all the kids had agreed on after they’d gone to the hospital. Billy clearly had anger problems and very obviously had disliked Steve, so it was believable enough. It’s not like Billy was going to tell the truth that he’d been taken down by his kid step-sister.

“Oh my God really?” Allie had been outraged. “But Billy’s so...” She had trailed off looking down the hallway.

Nancy had turned and seen that Billy was now surrounded by a group of girls who all seemed too eager to help the poor injured basketball player.

Nancy had rolled her eyes. “Stay away from him, Allie. He could have killed Steve.”

Allie had nodded absently.

Nancy had shaken her head and brushed past her friend. School hadn’t really seemed that important after everything that had happened, especially when she had known that the story she, Jonathan, and Murray had concocted was going to be dropping in the papers in the next few days, but it was definitely more important than lusting after some dirtbag who really should have been in jail.

Max had insisted that nothing happen to Billy for now since she was sure he’d learned his lesson. She had promised to tell Hopper the second Billy did something like that again to her or to anyone, and the boys had all sworn that they would look after her. According to the boys, Max had been happier than they’d ever seen her since she threatened Billy, so they’d all relaxed about him a bit, but Nancy could still see Steve in the Byers’ living room, his face covered in poorly bandaged cuts, struggling to keep his eyes open, staggering out the front door supported by Hopper. Things were okay for now, but Nancy was still worried about anyone living in the same house as the guy who had hurt Steve like that.

Once Steve had returned to school the following week, still tired and bruised, he’d been hounded by hoards of kids asking if he was okay

or, more often, for details on how Byers had attacked him after he'd already cheated on Steve's girlfriend.

"It was Billy, not Jonathan, and Nancy and I broke up, okay?" Steve had said probably a million times – not that anyone wanted to hear it. "All three of us are cool, so stop giving them shit. They didn't do anything wrong."

Steve might have said they were cool, and Nancy and Jonathan had visited a couple times while he was stuck at home, but things were definitely kind of weird between them. Nancy and Steve hadn't actually said explicitly that they were breaking up, but they both accepted that that was the implication of their conversation during Steve's basketball practice the day after the party. Nancy knew that it hurt Steve whenever he saw Nancy and Jonathan together, but he didn't seem mad, not really. After the story broke exposing Hawkins lab, Steve had nodded at them in the hallway, signaling that he was glad Jonathan had helped Nancy get the closure and justice she needed for Barb. Nancy wished him well and hoped that he'd be okay, even if things were going to be awkward between them for a while.

So it was weird when Steve ran up to Nancy and Jonathan at the movie theater two days after Christmas.

"Hey Steve," Nancy had said, a little confused, while Jonathan had only nodded a hello at the senior.

Steve looked uncomfortable, but seemed determined nonetheless. "I uh, I feel like you guys won't be into this, but there's gonna be a party at Matt's for New Year's Eve if you didn't know, and I just wanted to say that you're both totally welcome if you want to come. Don't feel pressured or anything, but just if you wanted to come by."

Nancy had heard about Matt's party, but she and Jonathan had already decided to spend New Years Eve at Jonathan's with his mom, Will, Mike, and the rest of the kids.

"Thanks for the offer, Steve," Nancy said with a smile, trying to let Steve know how truly grateful she was that he was thinking about them, "but we're gonna be at Jonathan's with the kids and his mom

that night.”

Steve nodded as though he'd expected that. “Yeah, Dustin mentioned that Mrs. Byers' was having a little shindig.”

“Do you want to come, Steve?” Jonathan asked suddenly.

Nancy turned to her boyfriend, startled by the question.

Steve seemed equally confused. “What?”

“Would you like to come to my place for New Years?” Jonathan repeated, his words completely serious. “I know Dustin and the other kids would love to have you around, and Nancy and I'd like to see you too.”

Steve stared at Jonathan for a moment before his face broke into a smile. “You know, I'd really like that. I mean I still told Matt I'd be at his place, but it'd be great to hang with you guys for a while, if you really don't mind.”

Jonathan smiled back. “We wouldn't mind at all. And it's the least we can do after everything you've done to try to get people to leave us alone about what all happened last month.”

Steve smiled almost wistfully. “Don't mention it, Jonathan. Those guys are assholes.”

Jonathan laughed. “Well we'll see you in a few days then.”

Steve grinned back. “For sure, Byers. See you, Nancy.” He waved and then disappeared back to a group of guys from the basketball team (which, thankfully, did not contain Billy Hargrove).

After Steve left, Nancy turned to Jonathan, shaking her head, a smile growing across her face.

“What?” Jonathan asked almost defensively.

Nancy shook her head again. “You never cease to amaze me, Jonathan Byers.”

Jonathan laughed and squeezed her hand. "Come on, we want to get decent seats."

New Year's Eve found Nancy and Jonathan cuddled together on the couch of the Byers' living room observing their younger siblings and friends. Dustin and Will were on the floor, video game controllers in their hands, both shouting at the screen. Max was sitting in a chair, while Lucas was perched on the arm, the pair whispering to each other and, Nancy was pretty sure, making fun of Dustin. Mike and El were seated just beside Nancy and Jonathan on the couch, Mike explaining to El what was going on in the game as the girl watched with interest, their hands never separating as though they were glued together. Hopper had repeatedly told El and the rest of the kids that he and the young girl were staying until midnight and not a minute more, and Mike was clearly taking advantage of every second he got to spend with his girlfriend. Hopper, for his part, was with Mrs. Byers in the kitchen, and Nancy could hear bits of laughter and conversation float out to the living room whenever Dustin and Will stopped shouting.

Around nine o'clock there was a knock on the door.

Jonathan smiled at Nancy and hopped up to answer it.

"Hey, I'm glad you could make it," Jonathan said, swinging open the door and grinning widely at Steve Harrington standing on the front step.

"Wouldn't have missed it for the world," Steve replied with a charming smile.

"Steve!" Dustin's voice called above the greetings from the rest of the group. "Get over here and watch me kick Will's ass!"

"You're losing, Dustin!" Lucas called exasperatedly to his friend.

"Chief, Mrs. Byers," Steve greeted the adults in the other room before turning back to the group of children in front of him. "So what's going on?"

"Dustin really sucks at this game," Max supplied helpfully, earning

laughter from the rest of the kids, Nancy turning into Jonathan's shoulder to hide her smile.

"And Will's really good," Mike added.

Steve ruffled Will's hair and sat down between the boys. "Good work, Will. Gotta deflate this one's head." He shoved Dustin lightly.

"My head?" Dustin asked incredulously. "What about you Mr. Steve 'obsessed-with-my-hair' Harrington? You get it? Hair, Harrington!" Dustin looked around for applause and found only blank stares.

"Nice one kid." Steve rolled his eyes, and then glanced up at Nancy and Jonathan shaking his head.

Nancy had to laugh.

The kids continued playing for the next few hours, taking turns, though Nancy saw that Dustin was playing way more than anyone else, clearly trying to practice so he didn't suck so much. Max and Will were the best, though Lucas gave them both a run for their money. Even El got a turn, and Nancy grinned as she saw Jonathan pull out his new Polaroid camera to snap a quick shot of Steve and Mike showing El how to play, a wide smile on the girl's face.

Jonathan grabbed a marker and wrote "NEW YEAR'S EVE 1984" across the bottom before handing it to El.

"So you'll always remember tonight," Jonathan said.

El smiled at him. "Tonight is too good to forget. But this makes it better." She took the picture from Jonathan, showed it to Mike and then ran over to give it to Hopper to make sure it stayed safe.

"You were right," Jonathan said as he sat down beside Nancy, taking her hand back in his and kissing the side of her head. "It's definitely worth it to have a Polaroid."

The night got later and the kids got more and more excited, especially as Max and Will faced off against each other in the most intense matchup of the night.

“WOULD YOU ALL STOP SCREAMING FOR TWO SECONDS?” Hopper finally yelled over the cheering kids.

Instantly everyone’s voices lowered to a whisper, while the high schoolers exchanged amused glances.

“Thank you!” Hopper said with a sigh. “It’s almost 11:30, and I’d really like to be able to hear at midnight.”

“11:30?” Steve repeated, jumping up. “I need to head out, another party to go to, you know.”

“See?” Dustin gestured toward Steve. “Look at that arrogance!”

Steve punched Dustin in the arm in lieu of an answer and then waved goodbye to the kids. “Thanks so much for having me, Mrs. Byers,” he called into the kitchen.

“Of course, Steve,” Mrs. Byers replied sweetly, “anytime.”

“Chief.” Steve nodded.

“Harrington.” Hopper nodded back.

“See you at school Nancy, Jonathan,” Steve said last, his smile sad, but content at the same time.

“Bye, Steve,” Nancy replied.

Jonathan just smiled and nodded.

Things quieted down considerably after Steve left. The kids were definitely getting tired, much to Hopper’s apparent relief.

With just a few minutes to midnight, Nancy stood up and took Jonathan’s hand. “Come with me for a second, okay?”

Jonathan stood and followed her, both of them making sure to not step on any of the kids that were lying across the floor.

Nancy locked eyes with the chief as they walked past.

Hopper raised his eyebrows at her decision to take her boyfriend into

a more secluded part of the house, but Nancy rolled her eyes. Of course she wasn't going to have sex with Jonathan while her little brother and all his friends *and* the Hawkins police chief were in the next room. Hopper nodded to her in understanding and refocused his attention on Mrs. Byers.

Nancy pulled Jonathan into his room and turned on the lights.

She must have looked very serious because Jonathan seemed concerned when she faced him.

"What's up Nancy?" he asked.

"I just wanted to say thank you. For everything."

Jonathan looked at her quizzically. "You don't need to thank me, Nancy. I-"

"Yes I do," Nancy interrupted. "Just let me do this okay?"

Jonathan nodded, still seeming confused.

Nancy took a deep breath. "Look, you stood by me through everything to get justice for Barb and you barely even knew her. You were fine with getting caught by the Hawkins lab and then a road trip to meet with a crazy and super conceited conspiracy theorist, and with things at school and then Barb's funeral and everything you were right next to me the whole time, holding my hand and helping me realize that it's okay that we're not okay. It means so much to me that you trust me and that you care about me, especially since I know you don't like most people." Nancy laughed slightly, thinking of that horrible day in the woods over a year ago when he'd said those words to her about Steve Harrington.

She continued, "I just really don't know what I'd do without you, or really how I ever did anything without you. So much of this year has been shitty and last year too, but this," she gestured between them, "has been by the far the least shitty thing to come out of this year and all of the insane things that have happened. And I kind of have to feel grateful for it, for you." She looked up at him. "I love you Jonathan Byers."

Jonathan's face split into a wide grin as he leaned forward to rest his forehead against Nancy's. "I love you too, Nancy Wheeler."

From the living room they could hear the kids counting down to midnight, Dustin's voice loud enough to be distinguished from the rest.

"3, 2, 1, HAPPY NEW YEAR!"

Nancy leaned in and pressed her lips to Jonathan's.

"Happy New Year, Jonathan."

"Happy New Year, Nancy."

Author's Note:

Thanks for reading!

Comments and kudos are so appreciated! <3